



Recent Budget Cuts Do Not Apply to Courts



On October 10, Governor Vilsack ordered the 2.5% across the board budget cuts for many executive branch agencies. The governor's action followed an announcement of the State Revenue Estimating Conference that state revenues were \$142.2 million below previous estimates.

"The national economic situation has presented serious challenges to the people of Iowa and their government, resulting in lower employment levels and a continued decline in revenue," said Governor Vilsack when announcing the cuts.

The cuts ordered do not apply to the court system.

"The Governor lacks the authority to cut the judicial and legislative branches. His action applied to executive branch agencies only,"

explained State Court Administrator David Boyd. "Although the Governor's action does not apply to the judicial branch, we're already cut to the bone and struggling to make ends meet."

Boyd does not anticipate the Governor calling the legislature into a special session to make more cuts. "The Governor balanced the budget with the across the board cuts," said Boyd.

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Justice Wiggins Investiture Set for November 7

On November 7, Governor Vilsack will administer the oath of office to Iowa's 104th supreme court justice, David S. Wiggins. Wiggins replaces Linda Neuman who retired from the court in July.

"David Wiggins is an exemplary choice for the Iowa Supreme Court. He is extraordinarily qualified and I know he will be an extremely hard worker and a very thoughtful and dedicated judge," said Governor Vilsack in August when announcing the appointment.

"I'm honored by the nomination and appointment," said Justice Wiggins. "I want to thank the state nominating commissioners and the Governor for their votes of confidence."

Justice Wiggins, who began his work on the court on October 7, earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Illinois in Chicago in 1973. He graduated with honors

and Order of the Coif from Drake University Law School in 1976. While in law school he served as associate editor of the law review. Justice Wiggins began his legal career as an associate in the West Des Moines law firm of Williams, Hart, Lavorato & Kirtley. He became a partner in the firm in 1979.

While a practicing attorney, Justice Wiggins served on a variety of judicial branch advisory groups including the redistricting commission (2002), the advisory committee on rules of civil procedure (1991-1997), the fax technology committee (1992-1995), and the special committee on cost of litigation (1988). In addition, he served as chairperson of the Judicial Qualifications Commission for the past three years.

Prior to joining the court, Justice Wiggins was active in numerous bar organizations including serving on

the Board of Governors of the Iowa State Bar Association, and serving as president of the Iowa Trial Lawyers Association, senior counsel for the American College of Barristers, master emeritus of the C. Edwin Moore American Inn of Court, a founding sponsor of the Civil Justice Foundation, and an advocate for the American Board of Trial Advocates. He received the Meritorious Achievement Award from the Iowa Trial Lawyers Association in 1999.

"Iowa's judicial system is a model for other states in many ways," said Justice Wiggins. "I'm proud to be part of it, and I'm looking forward to meeting and working closely with judges and employees at all levels of the judicial branch."

Justice Wiggins' investiture ceremony is scheduled for November 7 at 2 p.m. in the supreme court courtroom in the judicial branch building in Des Moines.

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Administrative Council Takes Shape

A proposal to establish a statewide court administrative council is taking shape. Earlier this year, the court announced it was seeking comments on the concept of creating a broadly based administrative council to provide guidance to the court and state court administrator in the overall administration of justice (see Iowa Bench Press, March-June 2003).

The idea of creating an administrative council for the Iowa Judicial Branch was first proposed by the Supreme Court Commission on Planning for the 21st Century. According to the Commission, a council would be an effective mechanism for “providing guidance in the overall administration of justice.”

“The value of securing the viewpoints and experience of court personnel from throughout the court system has been effectively demonstrated time and time again by our numerous court advisory committees and boards,” said Chief Justice Lavorato.

Council Role

The supreme court is proposing that the new administrative council would:

- Advise the court concerning the development and implementation of non-adjudicative statewide policies and practices to improve the overall

administration of the judicial branch;

- Identify needs and problems; recommend short and long-term strategies for improvements;
- Identify and recommend best practices in all non-adjudicative aspects of the administration of the district courts; and
- Take specific assignments from the court.

Membership

The court would appoint members to the council as follows:

- 2 district court judges
- 1 district associate or associate judge
- 1 magistrate
- 2 district court administrators
- 2 clerks of court
- 1 juvenile court officer
- 1 court reporter
- 1 clerk of court staff
- 1 court attendant
- 1 case coordinator
- 2 at-large court employees
- State court administrator
- Director of technology and information services

In general, membership would be limited to one three-year term except for initial terms, which would vary for the purpose of staggering terms. However, the terms of the state court administrator and the director of technology and information services would be on-going.

Under the court’s proposal, the council would elect its chairperson from among its membership. A person would serve no more than one three-year term as chair. The administrative council would adopt rules for conducting its meetings, would meet at least twice a year, and would be authorized to establish and oversee specialized workgroups to assist with its responsibilities.

Judicial Council

The administrative council would work parallel to, and when appropriate, in collaboration with, the judicial council. The judicial council shall continue to advise the court with respect to supervision and administration of the judicial branch.

“The court views both councils as valuable sources of information and advice on administrative matters,” said Chief Justice Lavorato.

Comments

The court is seeking comments, and volunteers or nominations for membership on the council. Please send your comments to State Court Administrator David Boyd by October 29.

Kordick Receives ICRA Award

By Jane Fitzgerald

At its award luncheon in June, the Iowa Court Reporters awarded Teresa Kordick the Roy Voelker Memorial Award for Distinguished Service, the highest honor that can be bestowed upon a member of the Association. The Voelker Award represents a continued involvement in, and contributions to the Association, the court system, and the court reporting profession.

Kordick is a shining example of someone who fits the description of this award. She is a truly deserving, motivated, hardworking reporter who has dedicated countless hours on behalf of all of us for the betterment of our profession. In 1978 after graduating from the American Institute of Business and receiving her certification, Teresa worked for Judges Robinson and Hyland in the Sixth Judicial District. From 1981 to 1984 she worked as a freelance reporter. She resumed work as an official reporter in 1984 for the Polk County Associate Court. Since 1985 she has worked for District Judge Glenn Pille in Polk County.

Kordick has continually strived to develop her skills and expertise throughout her career as well as contributing to the improvement of

the profession. She was certified as a Registered Professional Reporter in 1979; certified as a Registered Merit Reporter in 1994; and certified as a Registered Diplomate Reporter and a Certified Realtime Reporter in 1996. In 1995, she became a Certified Program Evaluator who evaluates schools across the country.

Kordick who belongs to the National Court Reporters Association, Iowa Court Reporters Association, and the Polk County Reporters Association, has served on the Iowa Court Reporters Association's Board of Directors as an Official Director, as well as serving as the Association's Vice-President, President-Elect and President.

In 2001 Kordick was appointed by the Supreme Court to the Board of Examiners of Shorthand Reporters and has been the Secretary of that Board since her appointment.

Kordick has served on numerous Association committees: She has also served on the Iowa State Bar Association's Trial by Jury Committee, the Iowa Supreme Court's Commission on Planning for the 21st Century Focus Group, a sub-

committee for the Iowa Supreme Court's Rules Committee, and American Institute of Business's Court Reporting Advisory Committee.

She was featured on IPTV's web site career page on court reporting. Teresa's responsibility in this latter project included conducting classes through the Iowa Communications Network for students or teachers interested in learning about reporting as a career option.

On the National level, Kordick serves on the National Court Reporters Foundation's Nominating Committee and is currently Chair of the National Court Reporters Association's Test Advisory Committee. She is the Chief Examiner at the Des Moines site for the RPR, RMR, and CRR exams. She has also served as the Chief Examiner for the CRR exam at the NCRA annual conventions in 1999 and 2001. She will again so serve in July of this year in Reno, Nevada.

Milestones: Service Anniversaries

25 Years

Cindy Kloubec, Juvenile Court officer, *Linn County*.

Tammy Van Bogart, Court Reporter, *Linn County*.

Marlys Harms, Judicial Clerk, *Linn County*.

Annetta Sharp, Juvenile Court Tech, *Des Moines County*.

30 Years

Mary Brooks, Court Reporter, *Dubuque County*.

Don Wyngarden, Juvenile Court Officer, *Wapello County*.

Diane Anderson, Judicial Clerk, *Linn County*.

Rebecca Tierney, Court Reporter, *Polk County*.

Mary Beaves, Judicial Clerk, *Dubuque County*.

Federal Review Shows Need for Improvements in Child Welfare Services

A federal assessment of Iowa's child welfare services released last week concluded that Iowa is not in substantial compliance with federal standards. This finding means the state must develop an improvement plan. There could be stiff financial penalties in the future if the state does not make progress.

The assessment is part of a federal effort to improve child welfare services across the nation. The Administration for Children and Families reviews a state's performance for providing safety, permanency, and well-being of children and families involved in the child welfare system. The agency judges states on measures such as maltreatment of children in the foster care system, rate of re-abuse of children, amount of time before reunification with parents, the rate of re-entry

into the foster care system, the time between a child's entry into foster care and final adoption, and the number of foster care placements per child. The review also looks at system support measures such as staff training, computer systems, and recruitment of foster and adoptive parents.

The review consisted of an examination of 50 randomly selected cases as well as focus groups and interviews of key stakeholders. The administration concluded that while Iowa is "consistently effective in reunifying children with their families in a timely manner," it does not do well in preventing re-entry into the foster care system. Iowa also fell short in ensuring placement stability, establishing permanency goals in a timely manner, achieving finalized adoptions in a timely

manner, and helping older children transition into adulthood. In the support assessment Iowa failed to meet standards for staff training, quality assurance, service array and case reviews.

Iowa is not alone. Since 2000, federal officials have reviewed the child welfare services of thirty-eight states and none have passed.

Anticipating the federal outcome, Iowa officials have been working for several months on a program improvement plan to be reviewed by federal officials. Iowa has 90 days to prepare the improvement plan, and two years to make improvements.

The entire federal review can be found at <http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/NewsReleases/default.asp>

New Faces

Supreme Court: **David S. Wiggins**, *Des Moines*, Justice; **Ann Tabor**, *Des Moines*, Legal Assistant.

District 1: **Lisa O'Connell**, *Waterloo*, **Rebecca Casey**, *Dubuque*, **Emerita Kies**, *Dubuque*, Judicial Clerks.

District 2: **Kevin Houlihan**, *Nevada*, Judicial Clerk.

District 3: **Lisa Walters**, *Emmetsburg*, Judicial Clerk; **Kara Minnihan**, *Sioux City*, Legal Assistant.

District 4: **Julie Jameson**, *Glenwood*, Court Reporter; **Kimberly Carter**, *Glenwood*, Judicial Clerk; **Heather Cook**, *Council Bluffs*, **Bob Keast**, *Red Oak*, Court Attendants.

District 5: **Julie Tonda-Stanton**, *Des Moines* (transfer from D8), Court Reporter.

District 6: **Jayne Schulte**, *Iowa City*, **Rebecca Line**, *Cedar Rapids*, Juvenile Clerks.

Sackett Marks 20 Years Service



Chief Judge Rosemary Sackett marked 20 years serving on the court of appeals recently. Judge Sackett was first elected chief judge in 1996. She is on the state Judicial Council and served as President of the Council of Chief Judges of State Courts of Appeal.

Legislative Interim Study of Judicial Districts

Another study of judicial districts is underway. A legislative interim committee charged with studying judicial districts and resources held its first meeting on October 7 at the statehouse. The committee, which must report to the General Assembly, is composed of the following members (the title in parentheses indicates the organization or group the member represents):

Senator Don Redfern (Legislature), Cedar Falls

Senator Keith Kreiman (Legislature), Bloomfield

Representative Gene Maddox (Legislature), Clive

Representative Kurt Swaim (Legislature), Bloomfield

Justice Marsha Ternus (Supreme Court), Des Moines

Chief Judge David Remley (Supreme Court), Cedar Rapids

Attorney H. Richard Smith (Supreme Court), Des Moines

District Judge Stephen Clarke (Judges Association), Waterloo

District Judge Annette Scieszinski (Judges Association), Albia

Chief Judge John Nahra (Judges Association), Davenport

Magistrate Virginia Cobb (Magistrates Association), Dallas Center

Shirley Faircloth (Juvenile Court Officers Association), Marshalltown

District Administrator Deb Dice (District Court Administrators), Ottumwa

Carmen Loveland (Court Reporters Association), Mason City

Julie Johnson (Clerks' Association), Washington

Randy Osborn (Clerks Association), Polk County

Carolee Philpott (AFSCME), Franklin County

Attorney Jay Eaton (Iowa State Bar Association), Des Moines

Attorney Elizabeth Reynoldson (Iowa State Bar Association), Osceola

Attorney Joe Holland (Iowa State Bar Association), Iowa City

Attorney John McClintock (Trial Academy), Des Moines

Attorney Megan Antenucci (Iowa Defense Council), Des Moines

Attorney Fred James (Iowa Trial Lawyers), Des Moines

Attorney Jackie Armstrong (Iowa Trial Lawyers), Mason City

Attorney Tom Drew (Iowa Trial Lawyers), Des Moines

Attorney Barbara Edmondson (County Attorneys Association), Washington

Chuck Eddy (Sheriffs Association), Atlantic

Marty Ryan (Iowa Civil Liberties Union), Des Moines

Curt Campbell (Community Based Corrections), Fairfield

Mike Bollard (County Records Association), Pocahontas

Rhonda Millhollin (County Supervisors Association), Corning

For more information visit
www.legis.state.ia.us/GA/80GA/Interim/2003/comminfo/judredist.htm

Seeking Nominees For 2003 Judicial Branch Awards

by Carroll Edmondson

The last couple of years have been extremely difficult for the Iowa Judicial Branch and its employees. Unfortunately, the prospects for this year and next year don't look much better. Yet through all the adversity faced by the judiciary, its employees continue to pick up the slack and in many cases perform their jobs admirably and well beyond the call of duty.

Now is the time for us to take the opportunity to recognize some of these examples of exemplary public service by our fellow co-workers through the Judicial Branch awards program. You can help provide this recognition and show appreciation to deserving co-workers by taking the time to nominate them for one of the Judicial Branch employee awards. The nomination process is simple and easy. It just takes a little time and effort on your part.

Anyone may nominate a candidate for an award. A person doesn't have to work for the Judicial Branch to nominate a candidate. Nominations must be submitted on the official program form or in a format that is substantially similar to the forms. **The deadline for submitting nominations for 2003 awards is December 5, 2003.**

There are four major awards given each year. The criteria for each award are described below.

The **Distinguished Service Award** will be given to a court employee who has at least ten years of service in the court system, has exemplified a sustained level of exceptional service to the courts, has demonstrated a strong commitment to public service, and has continuously initiated efforts to improve the administration of justice in Iowa.

The **Meritorious Service Award** will be given to five recipients. One award will be made to a person in each of the following groups: (1) a part-time judicial officer, (2) a clerk of court or employees of a clerk's office, (3) a non-judicial employee of juvenile court services, (4) a court reporter, and (5) an administrative employee at the state or district level. This award will be given to a person who has served at least five years with the court system, has maintained a consistent level of superior service to the public and to the courts, and has significantly improved court services at the local, district or state level.

The **Court Innovation Award** was established to recognize a person or group of persons who has demonstrated leadership in the development and implementation of an innovative program or process that

has improved the delivery of court services, public access to the courts, the administration of justice, and who has worked cooperatively with other courts seeking to implement the program or process.

One of the awards, the **Amicus Curiae Award**, was established to recognize the efforts of persons who do not work for the court system. This award will be given to a person who has made significant contributions to the administration of justice or has contributed substantially to building public support for the Iowa Judicial Branch.

A committee of the Judicial Council, chaired by the Sixth District Court Administrator Carroll Edmondson, will screen the nominations and choose finalists for the awards. The Judicial Council will select the award winners.

To obtain copies of the nomination form contact Cheryl Thrailkill in the offices of the supreme court or your district court administrator.

Send completed applications to Cheryl Thrailkill, Iowa Supreme Court, Iowa Judicial Branch Building; 1111 East Court Avenue; Des Moines, IA 50319. Feel free to e-mail completed nomination forms to Cheryl.L.Thrailkill@jb.state.ia.us

PREVIOUS JUDICIAL BRANCH AWARD WINNERS**2002****Distinguished Service Award**

John Wauters, Burlington
Tom Betts, Davenport

Meritorious Service Award

James Mefford, Chariton
Rae Jean Berger, Davenport
C. Bruce Buttel, Centerville
Marilyn Huff, Clinton
Thomas Kierski, Ft. Dodge

Court Innovation Award

Judge William Thomas
Cedar Rapids

Amicus Curiae Award

Volunteer Mediators of Linn County
Small Claims Mediation Project

2001**Distinguished Service Award**

Leesa McNeil, Sioux City

Meritorious Service Award

John Monroe, Cedar Rapids
Bert Ann Ray, Nevada
Pat Hendrickson, Davenport
Vicki Krohn, Harlan
Nancy Timmons, Jefferson

Court Innovation Award

Judge Richard Morr

Amicus Curiae Award

Monroe County Board of Supervisors

2000**Distinguished Service Award**

Bert Aunan, Des Moines

Meritorious Service Award

Magistrate Richard Hunt
Diane Meuller
Debra Shields
Gary Niles
Janet Harris

Court Innovation Award

Polk County Criminal Justice Information
Network (CJIN)

Amicus Curiae Award

Darrell Doss, Davenport

1999**Distinguished Service Award**

Ronald Branam, Des Moines

Meritorious Service Award

Magistrate G. Elizabeth Otte, Glenwood
Fred Nydle, Ottumwa
Kevin Skellenger, Des Moines
Craig Jorgensen, Sioux City
Dianne Head, Council Bluffs

Court Innovation Award

Judge Nancy Baumgartner
Judge Michael Newmeister
Judge Robert Sosalla, and
Judge Jane Spande, Linn County

Amicus Curiae Award

John A. McClintock, Des Moines

Court Focuses on Committees Reports

At its planning retreat this summer, the supreme court poured over recent reports of five advisory committees. The following is a summary of the reports and the court's action on each.

Juvenile Court Services Committee

This juvenile court services committee developed detailed casework standards covering intake, detention and shelter, informal adjustment, predisposition reports, supervision of youth on consent decree or probation after adjudication, placement cases, and interstate compact. In addition, the committee suggested core programs, which should be available in all districts.

One of the most significant recommendations was the committee's statewide staffing formula for juvenile court services. It proposed a statewide formula for juvenile court offices: one JCO (excluding the chief juvenile court officer) per 2800 youth ages five through 17. These positions would be allocated among the districts using a formula that gives 80% weight to child population and 20% weight to the poverty rate. In addition, the formula recommends one technician per three juvenile court officers; one program assistant (a proposed new classification to replace the juvenile court specialist position) for every eight juvenile court officers; and a supervisory ratio of

one supervisory per eight juvenile court staff. Finally, the committee suggested that any staffing disparities among the districts be addressed through attrition.

After reviewing the committee report, the supreme court:

- Approved the proposed staffing formula and supervisory ratios subject to further evaluation by the state court administrator.
- Approved sending the recommendation concerning the 45-day speedy trial rule to the juvenile rules committee for further study.
- Expressed support for the juvenile victim restitution program, and favored restoration of program funds once the budget picture sufficiently improves.
- Supports the concept of a juvenile court standing committee to advise the court on juvenile court policies.
- Approved a slate of recommendations for best practices and core programs as optimum goals subject to comment from the chief juvenile court officers and the availability of funds.

Chief Justice Louis Lavorato praised the juvenile court services committee report. He said, "This report is a valuable resource. The members of the court appreciated the cooperative and progressive spirit reflected in the committee's work."

Clerks' Office Management

This committee submitted a slate of recommendations aimed at improving the operation of clerk of court offices within the current statutory framework. Among other things, the committee recommended the use of audit review teams in every district to assess, evaluate and make recommendations concerning office layout and organization, ICIS knowledge and training, office practices and procedures, and adherence to rules.

The committee also favored expansion of technology using programs such as online access to records, online payment of fines and child support, electronic document management systems (EDMS), and ECCO.

In addition, the committee advocated development of pro se forms to be made available on the judicial branch website.

It recommended more training and education and specifically recommended reinstating the clerk of court conferences when financially feasible.

The committee proposed the creation of a regular clerks'

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committee to advise the supreme court and the appointment of a forms committee to standardize and update all forms.

The clerks' management committee recommended that a supervisory position be required in every county that does not have a resident clerk. It also favored adjustments to the compensation of clerks managing more than one county.

After reviewing the committee's report, the court took the following action:

- Instructed staff to evaluate the committee's list of statutory and non-statutory duties for further action.
- Supported the idea of having a standing committee on clerks' management to advise the court.
- Directed the state court administrator to evaluate the recommendation for a minimum of one supervisor in every office.
- Supported adjustments in compensation for clerks who manage more than one office according to the aggregate number of staff and using the current range of pay grades for clerks.
- Favored implementation of EDMS and expanded use of technology.
- Favored making the judicial branch website available on public access terminals in clerks' offices.
- Supported the use of audit teams.
- Supported more education and

training including the reinstatement of the clerks' conferences once funding improves sufficiently.

- Supported the goal of opening all clerks' offices to the public from 8 to 4:30, but at a minimum offices should be have uniform hours.
- Favored the development of more pro se forms by groups other than the courts such as the Iowa State Bar Association.

"The clerks' management committee submitted some helpful recommendations for streamlining practices and procedures as well as some solid management advice," said Chief Justice Lavorato.

Legislative Study of Clerks' Offices

Unlike the other committees, this group was mandated by the legislature in 2002. The committee was composed of representatives of court stakeholder groups such as legislators, attorneys, county officials, court employees, judges, abstractors, and probation officers, members of the general public.

The committee favored expanded electronic access such as EDMS and emailing orders; uniform hours for clerk of court offices of comparable workload; creation of a standing committee to develop best practices for clerks offices; updating the clerks' manual; providing the chief judge rather than district judges with the authority to appoint and remove a clerk; allowing one

clerk to manage multiple offices; a minimum of one supervisor per office; sharing and consolidating common tasks among offices through coordinating the use of staff and technology.

In addition, the committee noted: "If the people of Iowa demand a particular level of court services, they should be prepared to pay for it. The committee advocated full funding for the judicial branch.

After reviewing the committee's report, the court took the following action:

- Supported sharing and consolidating common tasks among clerks' offices by coordinating use of staff and technology as much as possible.
- Supported the goal of opening all clerks' offices to the public from 8 to 4:30 as much as possible. If this is not possible, the court favors standardized hours.
- Supported establishment of a standing committee to develop statewide best practices standards.
- Supported update of clerks' manual.
- Favored statutory change to authorize chief judge of a district rather than district court judges to appoint clerks.

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District Court Administration Committee

This committee submitted a proposed staffing formula for district court administration as well as a series of recommendations aimed at improving the efficiency of district court administration.

Many of the recommendations related to identifying and implementing best practices including a suggestion that judges and staff travel to other districts to observe and discuss different operation procedures.

The committee advocated a re-evaluation of the time standards for case processing and inclusion of all case schedules on ICIS.

A number of recommendations involved support staff. For example, the committee supported court attendants for assisting judges in high volume courtrooms. It also advocated substantial latitude concerning use of law clerks and district flexibility in the management of court reporters. It recommended the eventual adoption of a case-based formula for case coordinator and court attendant staffing levels.

"In addition, the court appreciates the committee's strong endorsement of adopting a process for identifying and adopting best practices," said Chief Justice Lavorato.

After reviewing the committee's report, the court took the following action:

- Approved the identification and adoption of best practices for all aspects of district court operations and directed the state court administrator to work with the district court administrators to create a process for identifying best or uniform practices.

Education Committee

In August, the Education Committee submitted a five-year plan to improve judicial branch education in Iowa. The plan proposes curriculum and faculty development, orientation and continuing education for all 1900 judicial branch personnel, new and expanded programs and materials, distance learning initiatives, additional staff and increased funding for education.

The plan includes an orientation program and mentors for all new staff. The orientation would cover an overview of the court system, personnel policies and benefits, effective communications, introduction to ICIS, and personal safety and courthouse security. In addition, a staff orientation manual should be developed and made available online, and a staff orientation program should be held in Des Moines every four months.

Orientation for new judges is another part of the plan. The committee recommended a judicial

orientation program offered every six months as well as training experienced judges to serve as mentors.

The committee suggested development of continuing education programs for all staff, and improvements to the continuing education program for judges. Up-to-date bench books, manuals and other educational materials would be available as additional tools.

Implementation of these ideas would require staff. The committee proposed the addition of an education specialist, a multimedia specialist, an educational specialist for judges and magistrates, and a publications manager.

Of course, all of this would cost money, which isn't readily available these days. The committee, recognizing this problem, recommended the creation of a \$1 fee or surcharge on all criminal defendants who plead guilty or are convicted. Receipts would be earmarked for judicial branch education.

After reviewing the education committee report, the court took the following action:

- Favored revitalizing and expanding the judicial branch education program with general operating funds once the budget outlook improves.
- Approved development of an orientation manual for all court personnel.

Clerks' Offices Resume Regular Public Hours

On October 1, nearly sixty clerk of court offices around the state resumed regular public business hours—8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The Iowa Supreme Court ordered the resumption of regular hours after receiving a recommendation by the judicial council to do so.

Clerks' offices around the state began reducing their public hours after the Supreme Court approved the measure in October 2000 as a temporary management option to provide offices with time to address growing backlogs. More clerks' offices reduced their public hours after staff lay-offs in January 2001. Over time as many as sixty-four offices were operating with reduced public hours.

"I feel we did benefit from the office being closed to the public, and could be more productive when we had periods where we did not have to answer the phone or wait on the counter. It gave us quiet periods to work on financials and other items that need some individual thought," said Rita Brannan, who works for the Dallas County Clerk's Office.

While staffing levels have not changed, many offices are in a better position to resume normal public hours because they have

adjusted their business practices to improve workflow. Some offices are even sharing staff and duties with clerks' offices in nearby counties.

The supreme court order allows for exceptions. A chief judge of a district may approve reduced public hours for an office when exceptional circumstances exist, but in any event offices must be open between 9 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. Presently, seven counties are operating under the exception.

Lawyers, local officials, and legislators applauded the change back to regular hours, which they view better service to the public. But not everyone is pleased. Some clerks whose offices are still struggling to keep up think the change back to regular public hours will make matters and morale worse.

According to Ruth Godfrey, Pottawattamie County Clerk morale in her office, which is short 12 people, "has hit an all-time low." "Nothing has gotten better since we first reduced hours. In fact, many things have gotten worse," said Godfrey.

Added Gloria Ward, Dallas County Clerk of Court: "We looked forward to the uninterrupted time

which allowed us to process and complete more work, with fewer mistakes, than we could sometimes accomplish during the remainder of the day. Morale was much better during our period of reduced hours."

Jenell Anderson, Page County Clerk said, "With the resumption of [regular] hours for the public, closing the books by 4:30 can be difficult. When our hours were 8:30 to 3:30 we never had to stay past 4:30 because we were able to close our books, make the bank deposit, deliver our mail, do filing and docketing without any interruptions. It was great and certainly helped office morale."

Annual Enrollment and Change Period runs October 17 to November 17, 2003

by William Snyder, Director of Human Resources

Friday, October 17, 2003, starts the annual enrollment and change period for the state's insurance and benefit programs. As in past years, the Iowa Department of Personnel will not be printing an employee benefits handbook for every employee. The handbook is posted on IDOP's web site at www.state.ia.us/idop/BenefitsHome.html. It is also posted on the Benefits Bulletin Board on Lotus Notes.

Highlights of Significant Benefit Changes

- Effective January 1, 2004, a \$15 standard office visit co-pay will be introduced in both Program 3 Plus and Iowa Select.
- Effective January 1, 2004, a family contract for both health and dental coverage will be made available to Domestic Partners provided they meet the requirements set forth by the State and the carriers. The State will pay the State's contribution toward the family premium of any health plan.
- Health insurance premiums have increased an average of 9%. In addition, the state's share of the family premium is increasing to 82% of the Iowa Select family plan cost. The following chart shows the employee share of the family premium for the various plans for full-time employees. If you are a part-time employee, contact your personnel assistant for the new rates. Single plans continue to be fully paid by the Judicial Branch.

Family Health Insurance Monthly Premium – Your Portion	
Plan	AFSCME Judicial
PPME	
Judicial Non-Contract	
Program 3 Plus	\$229.98
Iowa Select (PPO)	\$170.76
Blue Advantage	\$0.00
Coventry Open Access	\$44.50
Coventry Primary Care	\$16.36
John Deere Open Access Choice	\$229.76
John Deere Primary Care Select	\$20.52
United Healthcare	\$16.08

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- Family Dental insurance premiums for full-time employees are increasing as shown on the following chart. If you are a part-time employee contact your personnel assistant for the new rates.

- If you previously opted out of the Premium Conversion (pre-tax) Program you can enroll during the enrollment and change period by filing a pre-tax election form. If you were previously enrolled or opted out, your status will not change unless you file a change form.

- If you wish to continue in the Dependent Care or Health Care Flexible Spending Account, you must make a new election during the enrollment and change period.

- Family Dental Insurance (Delta Dental)
Monthly Premium – Your Portion

PPME	
Judicial Non-Contract	AFSCME
Judicial	
\$33.88	\$32.84

To make changes to any of your benefits during this period, obtain the proper enrollment forms from your Personnel Assistant and return the complete, signed, and dated forms to that individual no later than November 17, 2003.

Start-up Business is Light But Steady for E-Pay

In its first three weeks of operation, E-Pay, the courts' new online fine payment service, has collected nearly \$16,000 from 237 users. At this rate projected over a 12-month the courts' would collect about \$275,000 from 4100 users. Project manager Scott Ruhnke is pleased with the response so far. Ruhnke added that business should increase as word about the new service spreads.

The new service enables online payment of fines and court fees assessed for scheduled and other simple misdemeanor violations. The service accepts credit card payments 24-hours a day, seven-days a week, for violations occurring anywhere in Iowa.

"Our E-Payment is convenient, and expands access to the courts," said Chief Justice Louis Lavorato of the

Iowa Supreme Court. "The service should also ease some of the workload of our busy clerk of court offices, freeing up their time for other important court matters."

The online payment service is the product of a joint venture between the Iowa Judicial Branch and the Information Technology Enterprise of the Iowa Department of Administrative Services.

The Judicial Branch first began its online program in January 2002, with free public access to basic court docket information. In September 2002, the Judicial Branch added a subscription service that provides detailed case information for \$25 a month. The online program is immensely popular with the public, averaging 212,000 hits a day.